

**Honorable Michael M. Reyna
Chairman and CEO
Farm Credit Administration
Remarks at
FCA's Black History Month Celebration
McLean, Virginia
February 24, 2004**

On behalf of the FCA board of directors, I want to thank Mike Wilson and all the members of Blacks in Government (BIG) at FCA for sharing today's program with the agency. And I invite everyone to join me in giving Mike and his members another "BIG" round of applause. Again, thank you.

Founded by our forefathers over 200 years ago and based upon the belief that all persons are created equal ... with certain inalienable rights; ... America has been described by some people as an ongoing "experiment." And as such, observers and historians have sometimes asked what makes America so special; what makes America... America?

At her best ... America can be described by those things that transcend the ordinary and otherwise bind us together as a nation ... those things that make our great country a more perfect union. It is about the dignity of the individual person ... and the ideals of justice (otherwise known as fairness); it is about liberty (otherwise known as freedom); it is about the pursuit of happiness (otherwise known as opportunity).

And in the end ... America is really about us individually and collectively; ... it is about our individual civil rights and our collective social responsibilities -- we are America. And as such ... the ongoing experiment that is "America" ... is really about whether in our ongoing daily lives we can live up to the high standards our forefathers established for us. Will we -- individually and collectively -- ensure justice, liberty and opportunity for all Americans?

This question is a persistent one ... and is as relevant as when this nation began: can we rise above class; can we rise above culture, and ... as in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ... can we create a nation that judges a person, not on the color of his or her skin (or gender, or religion, or national origin, or sexual orientation) but on the content of his or her character?

As underscored by the civil war, America's promise ... and path to a more perfect union has not been easy; nor has it been quick.

How long did it take for women to get the right to vote?

How long did it take for workers to get the right to organize?

How long did it take for African-Americans to get their basic civil rights?

America is indeed a grand experiment ... and the experiment continues to this day...more than 200 years after the birth of our nation. And, if you don't believe me, just pick up a newspaper and read about the current national debate regarding civil unions and gay marriage.

Please remember...that as we reflect upon black history month, we are really reflecting upon what is best about America. And ... because we the people are "America" ... we are reflecting upon what is best in each of us.

I enjoyed today's event ... and I hope you did too. Thanks again for being here.